



# DYNAMICS OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA: EXPLORING IDENTITY, LITERATURE, AND CULTURAL IMPACT

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## ABSTRACT

The Indian diaspora, the world's largest according to the UN with 18 million people abroad in 2020, represents a narrative of migration, cultural assimilation, and evolving identities rooted in 19th-century British colonial movements. Now an integral part of the global diasporic community, diaspora literature thrives in both English and native Indian languages, addressing the complexities of cultural identity. While English literature gains recognition, native language works face challenges due to dominance. Despite hurdles, efforts showcase diasporic works, reflecting emotional expression and cultural preservation. Works by Indian diaspora authors like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, and Jhumpa Lahiri serve as a bridge between the homeland and adopted land, exploring questions of representation and belonging. Recent years have seen growing acknowledgment of diaspora literature in Indian languages, contributing to a deeper understanding of Indian society and culture, emphasizing the evolving nature of identity amidst global migration.

**KEYWORDS:** Diaspora, Indian Diaspora, Migration, Cultural Assimilation, Identities, Interconnectedness of Cultures

"Here you are, too foreign for home, too foreign for here,  
never enough for both."

-Diaspora Blues by Ijeoma Umebinyuo

assimilation, and as a matter of fact, their artistic identity tends to shift into a new bone.

'Diaspora' is a trip that negotiates a physical detachment from, and a cerebral attachment towards the motherland. Still, it also encompasses the cerebral connection to the home, down from 'home'. Diaspora begins from relegation. African diaspora evolved from the slave trade, Assyrian Diaspora from Arab subjection, Irish diaspora from great shortage, Scottish diaspora from upland concurrences, Palestinian diaspora expatriation of Arabs, American diaspora from the Genocide and numerous further. According to (Wahlbeck, 2002), the conception of diaspora can be developed into four forms. The first is geographical relegation and identity deterritorialization. According to this conception, diaspora is a cause of conditioning that unite new people in an area, anyhow of their ethnical background. This conception is frequently appertained to as diaspora of knowledge. The alternate is as a mode of artistic product, diaspora is formed through the conformation of a culture that exists in society. The third is a political dimension of contemporary diaspora. Through the political dimension, the diaspora is seen from the political conditioning and connections in the diaspora, both with motherland and its hosts; fourth, diaspora is seen as a form of social association. The last conception is analogous to the grouping of the four poles of the diaspora described by (Bruneau, 2012), diaspora, seen grounded on social associations that are related between motherland and its host. Diasporic Identity Diasporic identity is a result of a process of assimilation between motherland and host land culture. It's grounded on differences or pluralism. These differences are because every person has a different print of the assimilation process. Diasporic identity is a group identity and is associated with culture. Nonetheless, diasporic identity isn't

## INTRODUCTION

India is the country with loftiest mortal coffers, has the largest international population in the world. UN declared Indian diaspora as the largest in the world with 18 million people from the country living outside their motherland in 2020 and now it grows gradually. In Merriam Webster dictionary, the term diaspora is shown related to Jews. Diaspora is used to denote the Jews living outside Palestine or Modern Israel. In ancient Greek, Diaspora means to scatter about and that's exactly what the people of diaspora do. They scatter from their ancestral land or homeland, spreading their culture as they go. Ever since humans started their life in earth, migration has been an ineluctable part. With the ignition of husbandry came agreement. Still, the unanticipated natural catastrophes or some drive factors impelled them to move from one place to another. Therefore, we can define history in terms of diaspora, as it's the record of migrations. The word comes from the Greek word for scattering seeds. Moment the term refers to people who are living outside their ancestral motherland. Some people tend to associate the word "migration" with "Identity". It's a common thing to know that when people resettle from one country or nation to another, they also carry their knowledge and the feeling of torture with them. By the time they settle and live in the new country, they also try to settle down with the assimilation. As a matter of fact, their artistic identity tends to shift into a new bone. In general, migration can be defined as the process of going from one country, region, or place of hearthstone to settle in another. By the time the settlers settle and live in the new country, they also try to settle down with the

just a group identity, since it's the part of the ethnical element. According to Stuart Hall, diasporic identity is a product which is no way complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside representation. In other words, Hall argues that the identity of diasporic people is constantly being changed because diasporic individualities are those who are constantly producing and reproducing themselves again, through metamorphosis and difference. Diasporic identity is grounded on differences and changes. Because diasporic identity is changeable and constantly transubstantiating, identity should be allowed of as a product because it comes from a constant process. Also, Avtar Brah states that diasporic identity conformation's processes are exemplars par excellence of the claim that identity is always plural, and in process. The correlations between plural and in the process are subject to the politics in play under given sets of circumstances. Another word, the issue of diaspora refers to multi-locational within and across territorial, artistic and psychic boundaries. On the desire to return to the motherland, Avtar Brah emphasizes that not all Diasporas save a testament of return. Members of the diasporic community may risk out their claim in the entering country and assert their identity as a citizen. According to Stuart Hall and Avtar Brah statements, diasporic identity is an ethnical group identity that's always plural because there's a diversity of feting the identity within their characters. There will always be a new identity inside the group or community because identity is a product of their living process as it develops when they fraternize in their host land.

### Indian Diaspora

The origin of the Indian Diaspora has always been the indigenous social structures of the settlers and settlers. On the base of indigenous societies and languages in Europe, Indians produce their Bengali, Punjabi and Telugu Diasporas. Still, when there's a question of the Indian Diaspora, they always feel a part of it. It's the participated artistic heritage of Indians which lays the foundation for the Indian Diaspora. Numerous Indian myths and legends advise people against crossing the swell to travel abroad. Going beyond the 'KalaPani' black waters was considered unethical for the soul. And yet, Indians have been traveling and settling abroad in groups for long. Still, in ultramodern times, utmost of similar settling abroad happened during the nineteenth century when the British social administration transferred groups of Indians to work in other British colonies as indentured labour. This is how Indian Diasporas came to be formed. For colourful reasons ranging from profitable to political, the British social administration didn't want to employ original population either on the colonies or on development systems. Indian labour was one of the druthers that the British employed. This could be demonstrated as the 'pull' factor. Also, the British social rule in India had created what R.K. Jain calls, 'severe profitable and social disturbances. This was the 'drive' factor. Therefore, development of the husbandry of the colonies created employment openings abroad for groups of people belonging to either a community or a region. This is how people from Punjab, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Western Bihar, Gujarat, Sindh and Tamil Nadu came to form diasporic communities. Indian emigrants are spread around the world and form an integral part of the global diaspora. The job request

that has opened up as a result of globalization has made the eventuality of Indians more visible and functional. There have also been social and artistic exchanges. It's in this environment that the literatures arising from the diasporic people assume significance.

The literature of the Indian diaspora is a body of writing produced by people who identify themselves as being of Indian origin, but also belonging to foreign lands. Writing is embedded in a culture. That is, pens are products of a specific culture, drawing food from it and perfecting it in turn. Still, the world of diasporic jotting belongs to the in between space we spoke about over, the artistic no man's land, the point at which artistic armies from a community's history and present clash by day and by night to overpower each other. Since, it's believed, that creativity lies in countries of fluidity, contest, conflict and insecurity, diasporic pens seek this space, locating most their jottings then where emigrants are trying to ride two nags contemporaneously who more frequently than not are also pulling them in two different if not contrary directions. The confusion and the adventure that results therefrom is what diasporic or indigenous pens delight. From Naipaul to Rushdie, Mistry to Vassanji, indigenous pens across colourful locales and times have woven their tapestries from these two-tone yarns and textures. Through their jottings they recreate their motherland in their imagination and detect themselves in that serene space, which means literature from the Indian diaspora functions as a cover for the motherland on a global platform, and it traverses across literal ages and topographies. It explores questions of representation, and delves into the gests of disturbance, marginalization, and acculturation that are generally associated with migration to a foreign land. Contemporaneously, it examinations into the veritably idea of a 'home', and into the notion of belonging. It also draws upon a variety of perspectives from erudite and digital societies to estimate issues similar as gender, politics, generational conflict, race, class, and international hassles. An intersectional web of disquisition is carried out through these textbooks, with authors questioning the veritably base of their artistic individualities. Diaspora literature in English is largely associated with pens like V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, Kiran Desai, Meena Alexander, Salman Rushdie, and with the more recent Benyamin, Deepak Unnikrishnan and numerous further. "Being in diaspora means living in across-cultural environment, in which change, emulsion, and expansion are ineluctable those apprehensive of the complications produced a number of voices in recent times that echoed through the medium of literature"

(Hussain, 2005). Literature is one of the most prominent mediums through which migratory gests are transmitted from one generation to the coming. Literary textbooks carry a perception of history that links them to the history, whilst also carrying sapience into the future. This creates international individualities.

### Diaspora Literature in Indian Languages

The concept of the "diaspora" has been utilized in academic discussions represent writers from the Indian subcontinent.

While there has been sufficient attention given to diasporic writing in English, literature in Indian languages has not received the recognition it deserves. There are a significant number of writers who choose to write in their native languages. Language plays a crucial role in preserving ethnic identity and distinguishing one group from another. This study is also important for Western audiences as it offers insights into Indian society and culture (Telugu, 2009). However, regional diaspora literature in native languages has struggled to integrate with mainstream literature due to the dominance of English.

In the early stages, migrants relied on their native tongues, and their oral narratives were in vernacular languages, but not in written form. Diaspora literature in Indian languages has existed for some time, but it lacks public visibility, and Indian writers have faced challenges in promoting their works written in native languages. Diasporic writers who choose to write in indigenous languages believe that their unique style allows them to freely express their emotions and ideas. They seek to preserve their mother tongues within the hybrid cultural community. These writers hope that their language and literature will be passed down to future generations. They primarily write for the immigrant population of their own culture and engage with readers within the diaspora. They consider themselves to be writers, poets, audience, readers, and critics. Their motivation for writing stems from a desire to cherish their community's past and a fear of losing this heritage, which compels them to preserve their language (Telugu, 2009). Initially, diaspora literature in native languages served as a means of emotional expression for most migrants who did not come from an academic background, unlike those who wrote in English. Many of them work as doctors, engineers, or are simple homemakers who chose to immigrate. Writing provided them with an opportunity to uphold their languages, which formed the basis of diasporic culture, without having to return to India to do so.

More recently, there has been some critical examination of diaspora literature written in various Indian languages. Literary associations have been established within diasporic communities to provide a platform for these writers to share their works. Publishing houses such as the Vanguri Foundation in Houston have started showcasing diasporic works written in Indian languages. Diaspora literature in languages such as Bengali, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil, Sindhi, Kannada, Gujarati, Hindi, and many more are gaining global recognition today. The Vanguri Foundation in America, for the past 40 years, has been publishing Telugu diasporic literature that reflects the migrant experiences of writers, like those writing in English. The quote "Building temples, celebrating festivals and rituals are thus seen as affirmations of cultural identity" by Sireesha Telugu highlights the significance of literature in vernacular languages in deepening the understanding of private spaces, thereby enriching culture and heritage in novel ways. The novel "*Aadujeevitham*" (Goat Days) by Benyamin is a recent example that provides an alternative perspective on the diaspora by exploring the fractured identities of migrant Indians. The Malayalam version of the book challenges conventional notions of diaspora.

Indian diaspora literature in English has gained recognition both in academia and popular culture, and many of these works have been adapted into films. The cultural texts, such as films and documentaries, produced by the diaspora, present opportunities to explore diasporic cultural identities. According to Stuart Hall, cultural identity can be understood in two ways: as a shared culture and as the essence of one's being (Hall, 1990). This insight captures the struggles depicted in diasporic narratives as individuals strive to balance their roots with the values of their adopted homeland. Novels like "*The Namesake*" project the disparities between cultures and the efforts of migrant families to navigate the diverse and sometimes conflicting traditions. Jhumpa Lahiri, a second-generation diasporic writer, portrays characters caught in the tension between their Indian and American identities as they seek equilibrium.

The novel begins with Ashima Ganguly, preparing a snack in her Central Square apartment in Cambridge, embodying the attempt to balance the East and West. The choice of "Planters" peanuts in the Indian street snack signifies the confluence of different cultures. Ashima strives for her son Gogol, born and raised in the US, to embody both Indian values and an American outlook. She introduces him to Tagore to acquaint him with Bengali culture while ensuring he learns English to assimilate into his country. Throughout the novel, Ashima continuously strives to strike a balance between maintaining traditions and adapting to new changes in her new world. She eventually secures a job at the library, gaining independence and confidence, taking responsibility for her home and her children's lives. She learns that the diaspora is a fluid space that accommodates change. In her journey, she learns that migration is a choice, and that modern Indians embrace a global identity while maintaining a connection with their homeland (Sen, 2006).

The metaphor of clothing is used by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her short story "Clothes" from the collection *Arranged Marriage* to depict the transformation of a newly wedded wife from a shy young woman into a bold and strong character. Sunita's changing fashion choices at different stages of her life symbolize her evolving characteristics as she embraces a hybrid modernity that incorporates both Indian and Western influences (Divakaruni, 1995). The diasporic new generation actively seeks global exposure and cultural fusion, contributing to India's mobility towards globalization and modernization. Humor is employed by Anurag Mathur in "*Inscrutable Americans*" to satirically depict the experiences of 'half-baked' Indians in modern America. The novel suggests that mobility between nations is necessary to stimulate positive change in the country of origin (India). Gopal's encounters in the novel highlight the differences between America and India and emphasize the role of globalization in India's development. The text also explores the anxiety associated with witnessing a new "global" India. It ultimately suggests that change encompasses psychological growth and an aspiration for a better home nation among immigrants. Modernity in India is not solely influenced by Western culture but rather results from a symmetrical process of cultural change and adaptation (Jain, 2012). These cultural changes and adaptations are reflected in many literary texts

produced by diasporic writers. Today's Indian diaspora and its literature represent advancements in culture, ethics, society, politics, and economics worldwide, while showcasing unique perspectives. Novels such as *"Goat Days"* by Benyamin and *"Temporary People"* by Deepak Unnikrishnan challenge the romanticized notions of diaspora. To promote Indian languages, many writers express their concerns through narratives. Indian diaspora writers have successfully garnered recognition by winning literary awards. With a presence across six continents and 125 countries, the Indian diaspora has established new homes away from their homeland.

## CONCLUSION

Diaspora literature of nearly two hundred years has made a difference in the very way a 'nation', in this case, India, is viewed. The modern-day Indian cinema similarly represents more of the Western world, making the diaspora a substitute for the homeland. Movies like *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998), *Namstey London* (2007) and *My Name is Khan* (2010) offer representations of the changed family and social systems due to immigration into a land with different values and cultures. The characters adapt to Western modernity but are also balanced due to their "Indian" ways. Diasporic experience is basically about 'home' and 'world' where home stands for the culture of one's origin and world refer to the culture of adoption. Sometimes the concept of home is equated with that of the nation one is born into and world as the nation's one immigrates into or exiles one into. Because of this sense of 'exile', an alternative term used for diasporic experience is 'homelessness', a term that was popularized by Said but that is also a favourite of a writer like V.S. Naipaul. Homi Bhabha would explain this experience in terms of what he calls 'gathering' 'gathering of exiles and emigrants and refugees, gathering on the edge of Indian Diasporic Writing foreign cultures, gathering at frontiers; gathering in the ghettos or cafes of city centres" as would he put it. Rushdie, on the other hand, would turn home into 'imaginary homelands' and liken them to broken mirrors some pieces of which are lost irretrievably. However, the picture that emerges out of the broken mirror-that is to say, the diasporic experience-may be different from the one reflected by a mirror that is whole, but it is no less significant. It contains images of not only the donor culture but of the host society as well. M.G. Vassanji would find a parallel for the diasporic experience in a jigsaw puzzle some of whose pieces are again lost like the pieces of Rushdie's mirror. For Vassanji, the creativity of a diasporic writer lies in supplying those missing pieces with the help of his imagination and the resultant history would be what he calls 'imagined history'. Abdul Jan Mohammed describes immigrant's experience to be that of a 'border intellectual' either 'specular' or 'syncretic' the first refers to an experience wherein an immigrant is not able to adjust both to 'home' and 'world' simultaneously whereas syncretic refers to an experience wherein an expatriate is able to reach out to both cultures the donor and the recipient simultaneously.

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